

THE
IMPORTANCE

OF AN

Uncorrupted Parliament

CONSIDER'D.

IN THREE LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO THE

ELECTORS of GREAT BRITAIN.

To which is added

A F O U R T H.

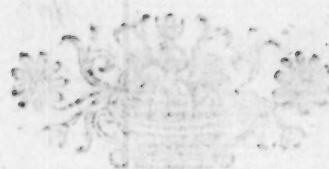


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P R E F A C E.

THE following Letters were so well received by the Public upon their first Publication in the Englishman's-Evening-Post, that it was thought a Republication of them in Form of a Pamphlet might be of Service at this juncture, the rather because that tho' the Paper in which they were first published has met, and continues to meet, with extraordinary Indulgence from the Public, yet as Papers of all Kinds are often read no otherwise than as the Amusement of the Day, the following Letters may be rendered, by this Method, more generally useful than they could otherwise be.

*We thought ourselves oblig'd to make no Deviation from the Form in which they originally appeared in the Englishman's-Evening-Post, tho' we have some Reasons for believing that had the Author revised this Edition, which his great Distance from the Press prevents him from doing, he would have made several Alterations from their original Form. This is a Liberty we will not take, but give them to
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P R E F A C E.

the Public in the same Manner in which they came to our Hands.

In the mean Time, the World may expect soon to meet, in the same Paper, with some other Dissertations by the same Hand, upon Subjects of equal Importance, which we doubt not will recommend it to the Favour and Indulgence of the Public.



T O




TO THE
ELECTORS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN.



LETTER I.

GENTLEMEN,

T would be quite superfluous in a public Writer at this Time, to enlarge upon the *Dignity*, or the *Importance* of a *British Elector* into Parliament. He enjoys *Privileges* that were unknown to the Citizens of *Greece* or *Rome* in the most *distinguish'd* *Periods of their Liberty*; and as often as the Time of Election returns, so often may the Electors of *Great Britain* be said to have not only their *own Happiness*, but *that of their Posterity in their own Hands*. It must however be owned, that the *Conduct* of an Elector is now of much greater

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Importance to the Freedom of his Country, and the Independency of the Legislature, than it was in the Days of your Fathers. Your Fathers, if through Ignorance, or any other Influence, they were mistaken in a Representative, had it in their Power to change him for one whom they had Reason to believe would be more honest and uncorrupted at the Expiration of three Years, or sooner : But in you, Gentlemen, a Mistake of that kind may be attended with the most fatal Consequences to your own Liberties, to the Interest of the Nation, and even to those of your Sovereign : When you delegate your Power you part with it for seven Years, a Term sufficient for establishing the most comprehensive System of Tyranny ; a Term during which, by the Course of Nature, many of your own Lives must determine, and perhaps with a melancholy Reflection of leaving Misery entail'd upon your unoffending Posterity.

It is in vain, Gentlemen, to flatter yourselves that the Liberties of the Nation must be always intire, while a Race of Princes possess a Throne which they owe to the Affections of the People, and to the Spirit of Liberty. Princes, tho' they may be the Heirs to the Crown of their Ancestors, are not always Heirs to their Virtues. Could his present Majesty and his illustrious Son transmit their Virtues, as their Dignity, to their

Posterity, we might indeed justly flatter ourselves that a *strenuous Assertor* of the Liberties of *Britain* would never be wanting on her Throne; but *Reason* and *Experience* convince us that this is not the Case: And give me Leave, *Gentlemen*, to observe, that tho' it were, the Power and Influence of a *corrupted Parliament* may reach farther than what is commonly apprehended. About a Century ago your Fathers saw what a *modelled* Parliament could do under a Tyrant; let their Sons beware of making the Experiment of what a *corrupted* one may do under a M——r.

They may, if they find it for their Interest, be equally Enemies to the *Rights of the Crown*, and the *Liberties of the Subject*. It is the peculiar Glory of the *British* Constitution, that the Interests of the King and the Commons of *England* are inseperable. It was the great *Alteration of Property* in your Favour, that *emancipated* the Crown itself from the Encroachments of the *aspiring Barons*, from whose Power the *Natural Rights of the Subject* suffered so much; and it may yet require *Caution* and *Integrity* to prevent their Descendants from relapsing into a worse State from a *corrupted Parliament*.

Your Ancestors wisely provided against the Encroachments of *Prerogative*, they
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circumscribed the Power of the Barons, and struck out a Constitution that *seems to execute itself*; but they never dreamed that a Time might possibly come when it might be necessary to *guard you against yourselves*, when your Representatives should know an Interest destructive to that of their Constituents, when Power might entrench itself within those very Fences that their *Wisdom* had thrown round their *Liberties*, and when those *Rights*, which they purchased at the Expence of their Lives and Fortunes, might become the *Scourge*, and forge the *Chains* of their Posterity.

It is your *private Virtues*, Gentlemen, alone that can prevent this from ever being your Case. Constitutions may be founded, and Laws enacted, but *private Virtue* alone can secure your *personal Independency*, from which all *public Virtue* arises. Men, when they are under no *Necessity to be corrupted*, have the smallest Temptation to be *vicious*; and nothing is so ready to lay Men under such a *Necessity* as *Luxury*. *Luxury* soon destroys *personal Independency*; it is the surest Engine that has ever yet been applied to undermine the *Liberties* of a *Free People*; nay, I will venture to affirm, that it never yet got Footing, but it has effected that detestable End. It was not Arms that destroy'd the Freedom of *Greece* and *Rome*; it was their Citizens departing from those frugal sober Maxims that render'd

der'd the *Free* independent of the *Great*. These last well knew that the only way to *enslave* was to *corrupt*; hence arose that Flood of *Luxury* which broke the *generous plain Spirit* of the People, begot *Faction*, and ended in the Ruin of their *Liberties*. But, *Gentlemen*, if any of you are *determined to be bribed*, if the *Habits* you have fallen into, if your *Circumstances in Life* absolutely require that you should taste of the *intoxicating Cup of Corruption*, take the *Bribe*, I say; you can do it with a good Conscience, you may remain honest. The *Money* you receive in that manner is your own *Money*, for none can afford to *bestow it* but those who have *purloin'd it from the Public*; and what is *purloin'd from the Public* comes out of every *private Man's Pocket*. This will be at least a wise Conduct, because it can be attended with no Inconveniencies to yourselves. For when the *Jobb of an Election* is over, the *Corruptor*, if chosen, looks upon the *Corrupted* with *Contempt*, with a *secret Aversion*; if you take his *Money* and yet vote against him, he may exclaim against you, he cannot hurt you, and you have the Satisfaction of having at least a Chance to be free, and your Interests better looked after.

It must be owned, *Gentlemen*, that the *Heart of Man is hard to be known*, and that with the most upright Endeavours you may be deceived in your Choice. But
still

still, by a *little Attention* to the Conduct of those in *public Life*, you may with the *strongest Probability* form a *right Judgment* of your *Candidates*. There is no Country in the World whose Constitution is so well known, and therefore there is no Country where the Body of the People (the Collective Body I mean) is so well qualified to form a true Judgment of their own Interests, provided their Constitution is the Rule by which they are to judge. Therefore, *Gentlemen*, if a Candidate offers, whose *former Conduct* led him to defeat every *Enquiry* that was proposed to be set on foot for detecting the *Mismanagement of a corrupted Administration*; to skreen the Embezlements of the Public-Money; the notorious Prostitution of the Faith and Honour of this Nation by inconsistent inglorious Treaties; who voted himself into *Posts*, after you had voted him into *Power*; who, after he was become *criminal to his Country*, eluded her *Justice*, by *perverting her Laws*; who refused to submit his own or his P——n's Conduct to any Censure but to that *in which they themselves were to have a Voice*; and who by means of the very Grievance complain'd of, I mean a *corrupted determined Majority*, found Means to *continue*, and as far as they could to *perpetuate, that Grievance*; I say, *Gentlemen*, if a Person
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of that Character (should any such exist) offers, and the Voice of the Public points such Men out, *reject* him; if no Candidate presents, whom by his Conduct you know to be of a *reverse Character*, trust those whom you have had *no Experience of*; and thus rather venture upon an *Ill that you do not know*, than upon that which is *already certain*,

The Nation; *Gentlemen*, is at present engaged in a just and a necessary War, in Defence of all that ought to be dear either to a Free or a Trading People. Men in Power tell you, that because of this War you ought to be *unanimous*; so I say too: But let not this *Unanimity* be in favour of those Men, if any such are, whose inconsistent prostituted Conduct have drawn you into this War; such a *Unanimity*, or *Confederacy* rather, would undo you; for had not, *by the visible Interposition of Providence*, your present Enemies been so much infatuated as to refuse, by presuming upon the experienced Weakness of those in Power, to pay a poultry Sum, and thereby forced them into a War, *your Trade*, *your Navigation*, perhaps your *Liberties*, might have been now at the Mercy of an *insolent faithless Court*. If you look back, *Gentlemen*, to that *dreadful Juncture*, tell me which of you does not shudder at the Thoughts of the terrible Precipice this Nation

Nation has escaped. Therefore, give yourselves Leave to reflect on a *positive demonstrable Truth*, that if the *same Persons* are furnished with the *same Power*, you must be again exposed to the *same Danger*. It lies now at your Door, *Gentlemen*, to make this a *National*, and not a M——l War, that is, a *glorious*, a *successful* War, and not a *sneaking privateering* one ; and you can do it by chusing for your Representatives, Men who will not pin their *Honours*, their *Consciences*, and their *Liberties* upon the Sleeve of a M——r for a little *temporary Interest*, which at last must cease whenever their P——n has obtained his Ends ; for there is no *Proposition more infallible*, than that *Power* will support P——men no longer than P——men can be of Service to *Power* ; and they are no other than the *rotten Materials* by which she rears her *Batteries against the Laws and Liberties of a Free People*. They may for a short time survive the general Wreck, but all the Favour they shall meet with is no other than was offered by the *Cyclop* to *Ulysses* ; *they will perhaps be the last that are sacrificed*.

It becomes you, *Gentlemen*, to shake the *Foundations of any such Fabrick*, if any such is now *rearing* ; you may do it consistently with the *Peace of your Country*,
and

and with the *Duty and Allegiance* you owe to your *Sovereign*; you may do it by chusing *honest Men* to represent you in *Parliament*. If every *Individual* will but shun that *Collusion* betwixt himself and *Power* which he would detest betwixt *Man and Man*, the Work is done, and when it is done, you make your Prince the *Sovereign* of a great, a happy, and a united People.

I am,

Gentlemen,

Yours, &c.

*To the Author of the
Englishman's Evening-
Post, April 15, 1740.*



C

LET.



L E T T E R II.

GENTLEMEN,

I N my former I endeavoured to point out some of the *fatal Consequences* that must attend your not being upon your Guard against the *Arts of Corruption* at the next *General Election*, and likewise what Men you ought to put a *Negative* upon, if you desire to be as *just to your Posterity* as your Fathers *have been to you*. Give me Leave now to recommend a few Things to your Consideration, with regard to the Merits of those Gentlemen who are commonly thought to be no Friends to those now in *Pension and Pay*, who want to give *Strength to the Nation*, by taking *Power from the M——r*, and who wish to reconcile *the Principles of Government* to those of *Liberty*.

I know, *Gentlemen*, that a Notion is industriously propagated among some weak Minds, as if those in the Opposition, were they to get into the Ministry, would make a worse Use of their Power than those do who now have the Honour to be in the Management

Management of Affairs. To expose this ridiculous Suggestion, let us consider what the present Struggle betwixt them and their Antagonists is. The one Party is struggling to *deprive themselves of the Means of betraying their Country*, if they shall ever come into Power; the other to *retain Possession of the Means* without being accountable for the *Abuse of the Power*. This, *Gentlemen*, is the plain State of the Case betwixt the two Parties, or rather betwixt a *Party* and a *Faction*. Now, let me ask the meanest Understanding, if it is possible for Men to give a more *real*, a more *undeniable* Proof of their *Disinterestedness* than by *disqualifying* themselves from abusing their *Trust*, that is, by rendering it impossible for them ever to *fill the Parliament with a Majority of Creatures* who have a daily Dependance on themselves, if ever they shall have the Honour to be in the Administration. There is not, *Gentlemen*, one single Instance in which a Minister can abuse his Power, but in this last which I have mentioned: For if there is an *uncorrupted Parliament*, there must, by the Accessions which Liberty has acquired by the Revolution, be a *disinterested Administration*. Take from a Minister the *Power of corrupting a Parliament*, you give to your Country the *Means of controuling the Minister*. He may pretend indeed to screen himself behind *Pre-*
rogative,

rogative, but when a Parliament is uncorrupted, *Prerogative* exerted in favour of a wicked Minister may hurt the C——n, but never can *protect the Offender*. Does he squander the *Public Money*? An uncorrupted Parliament can *enquire*. Does he prostitute the Public Faith? An uncorrupted Parliament can *impeach*. Is the P——e so weak as to *take his Part*? Pardons avail nothing against *Parliamentary Impeachments*. In short, Gentlemen, an uncorrupted Parliament will *enquire, impeach, and condemn* too, when they see Reason.

Thus, when there is an uncorrupted Parliament, the Interest of the Nation and the Liberties of the People never can suffer from a *Minister*, because it must be always in the Power of the Parliament to *crush him* if he attempts to subvert either; and it is a Power which you are sure such a Parliament will never fail to exert, for one plain Reason, because it is their *Interest*. Every Member of Parliament, as a private Person, distinct from his public Capacity, suffers equally with the other Subjects of *England*, when *expensive, foolish and dishonourable Measures* are carried on; therefore the *Interests of an uncorrupted Parliament* being the same with your own, they have the strongest Tyes that it is possible to conceive to be just to their *Trust*.

Having

Having said, *Gentlemen*, that it is only by means of *corrupting the Parliament* that a *sole Minister* can ruin his Country, give me Leave to observe, that if by your *Uprightness* and *Steadiness* such Men are not returned who cannot be corrupted, all the *Precautions* you can otherwise take to secure your *Liberties* and *Interests* must be but *poor* and *feeble*. Were, by the Nature of our Constitution, the Power that you delegate *revocable at Pleasure*, were the Representatives *punishable by their Constituents*, you might then have reason not to be so delicate in your Choice, because, tho' every Principle of Humanity and Honour were dead within them, yet *Interest*, that *invariable Spring of human Actions*, would oblige them to be *honest*. But that, *Gentlemen*, is not now the Case, tho' it formerly, in some measure, was. Formerly, the Delegation of a Representative was revocable in twelve Months, or sooner, which very probably might be the Reason why by the Nature of our Constitution there was no *coercive Power* upon Representatives; but the Power of a Parliament is unknown to all but itself; it is subject to no *periodical Dissolution*, tho' each of its Members is separately vested with a *determinable Power*, and contrary to the Nature of all human Beings, it can *prolong its own Existence*. This, *Gentlemen*,
is

is no *idle Speculation*, no *invidious Possibility*, or *improbable Supposition*, started to create Apprehensions at this Juncture, but a Truth which we have in our own Times known to be verified by Experience. You are therefore, *Gentlemen*, to consider, that the very Breath that vests the *Representation* in your *Delegate* vests him with a *Power*, which it is impossible for you to foresee how he may use; a *Power*, that if his *Ambition* and *Avarice* should prove too strong for his *Honour* and *Conscience*, he may abuse, so as to deprive you of the Means of shaking off an *infamous Dependence*, any other way than by your having recourse to act upon the Principles which can only be justified by a total *Dissolution* of that *tacit Contract* ever supposed to exist betwixt the *Governors* and the *Governed*.

This Prospect, *Gentlemen*, *melancholy* as it is, may admit of a much *deeper Gloom* and yet not be *overcharged* with *Horror*, if you consider that it is in the *Power* of a *corrupted Parliament* to take from you the Hopes, even by the most National Struggle for your Liberties, of breaking those Chains which a *wicked Minister* may impose. This they may do by furnishing that Minister with a *Standing-Army* in Time of Peace. As a *Standing-Army* has no *Property* in the Nation but its *Pay*, and every Body
of

of Men will act by the indeviating Principle that I have already mentioned, of Interest, that Army will do whatever they can to secure their Property. It is said, indeed, that the Gentlemen who must command such an Army would have a *natural Interest* in the Country, and therefore there is no Probability they will join in any Measures that may render their *Civil Properties precarious*. But give me Leave to ask you, *Gentlemen*, if a Time should come when those in the Army who have an *unnatural Interest* shall out-number those who have a *natural Property*, or if the *Advantages* arising from an *unnatural Interest* should in the same Men prevail over their Concern for the Preservation of their *natural Property*, whether you think Duty or Honour could restrain an Army, commanded by such Men, from establishing their own *Continuance* on the *Ruin* of their *Country's Liberty*.

That I may be the more clearly understood, *Gentlemen*, you will please to reflect that neither a *sole Minister* nor a *Standing-Army* have the least Existence in the Nature of our Constitution, therefore all the Interest that connects the one to the other separates both from that System of Government upon which your Laws are founded, and by which alone your Liberties can be preserved. On this Account
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it is, that I call the Property which a Soldier may claim in his Pay an *unnatural Interest*. It is an Interest unknown to our Constitution, because the Soldiers of all Ranks, which the Nature of our Constitution admitted of, were Men who had a *Property* in the *very Ground* upon which they fought, so that they never could *enslave their Country*, because they must thereby have *given up* or *weakened* their own Property. Compare such an Army, *Gentlemen*, with an Army paid and continued by a Minister, or, which is the same Thing, by a *Parliament under the Influence of a Minister*; an Army whose Pay can be *continued*, nay, possibly may be *perpetuated*, after your Laws, your Rights, and your Properties are *subverted*, by an *all-engrossing Power*; an Army that gathers Strength by the Progress of this Power, and can only be broken by the People reverting to their *constitutional Independency*.

It is commonly said, that *Power* follows *Property*, but in this Case, *Gentlemen*, *Property* will, in some Sense, follow *Power*. It is a melancholy Consideration, that by the mistaken Politics of those who perhaps wished well to their Country after the Revolution, *Property* has still been *accumulating* in the Hands of *Power*; and should you, *Gentlemen*, ever chuse a *Parliament*

liament less *un-corrupted*, or less *tender* of your Liberties than your present Representatives are, you must soon have the *un-comfortable* Prospect of becoming Bankrupts to your own *Trustees*.

Mean Time I hope I have, with all the Respect which a good Subject ought to have for the Laws of his Country, and with all the Regard a private Man ought to entertain for his Superiors, laid the above Matters before your Eyes at this Juncture, without the least Mixture of Personal Reflections or Invectives against any Man, either in his public or private Character; and as you approve I shall continue this Address.

I am,

Gentlemen,

Yours, &c.

*To the Author of the
Englishman's Evening-
Post, April 22, 1740.*

D

L E T.



L E T T E R I I I .

GENTLEMEN,

IT was excellently said at a Time when King *Charles I.* wanted to take Advantage of *some Defects* not expressly provided against by the Terms of the then *existing* Laws, *That it is the Execution of Laws according to their Equity and Reason, which is the Spirit that gives Life to Authority. The Letter kills.* This, *Gentlemen*, is a Maxim which is legible in the Conduct of your Ancestors, during all the Struggles they ever had for any *Accession to the Security of their Liberties.*

After the great Alteration of Property in favour of the Commons of *England* under *Henry VII.* when your Fathers acquired that Weight in the Government by their *Representative* which they before had only in their *Collective* Body, the *Military Tenures* fell first into *Desuetude*, and then were utterly *abolished*. Thus the *mediate* Power, by which the Barons were always enabled to stem the Encroachments

encroachments of the Crown, by the Nature of the Constitution devolved upon the Crown itself, and consequently, the Militia fell into the Hands of a Prince, who from mistaken Maxims of Government grasped at *Arbitrary Power*. The wide Steps made by *Charles I.* to compass this favourite View alarmed the People; they insisted that the *Spirit of the Law was to be regarded* when the Letter of its being abused might evidently tend to subvert their Liberties; the Prince, *tenacious of his Prerogative*, absolutely refused to gratify them; but the People, *regardless of Words* when *Essentials were in Danger*, wrested from him the *Power of the Militia*: Happy had they known the just Bounds where *lawful Resistance loses* that Name. Unhappy Prince! who thought that Sounds could subdue the Spirits of an uncorrupted People.

This Instance, *Gentlemen*, I have mentioned, not with regard to any Paralel that can be drawn from the present Situation of Things; because nothing can be more distant than all the Circumstances of this and that Reign, but to prove that it is absolutely impossible to foresee the Abuses that creep into the best Constitutions, and as impossible to prevent them, but by the People having Recourse to the Right they have of asserting *Equity* against *Law*.

Could it have been foreseen that the *Artillery of the People* might be one Time turned against them, there is not the least doubt, but that effectual Care would have been taken to put the *Militia* on such a foot as that its *being invested* in the Crown could not *have endangered their own Liberties*.

I shall now, *Gentlemen*, beg Leave to point out the absolute Necessity you are under, from the Nature of the Constitution as it stands at present, to chuse *uncorrupted honest* Men into Parliament. It was generally thought, and good Reason too, after the Revolution, that the making two distinct Branches of the Public Revenue, one for the Support of his Majesty and Family, and another for the Services of the Nation, and making the Ministry accountable to Parliament, was a sufficient *Barrier* to prevent any *Embezzlements* of Public Money. But it never was dreamed of, that a Time might possibly come when that very Precaution might become the Motive for defeating the Ends of the Legislature, and erecting a more solid and broader Foundation of Tyranny than could possibly have taken Place had no such Provision been made. This, *Gentlemen*, can be affected only by a *corrupted* Parliament; for if a Parliament is corrupted, it can only be by that very Money of which the People has made them

them Trustees for its right Application. Your Constitution at present admits of your Representatives, as Servants of the Crown, enjoying those Revenues, of which, as Trustees of the People, they are constituted Guardians. Thus, *Gentlemen*, it is evident, that if a Parliament is not uncorrupted, they may become both the Judges and the Criminals, and the Strength of the Nation applied against itself. Should this ever become your Case, how can your *Allegiance* possibly be reconciled to the *Preservation* of your Liberties. If you resist, you resist against the *Letter of the Law*; if you submit, you give up your own Rights, you betray those of your *Posterity*, and you undo all the *beautiful Fabric* that the generous Labours of your Ancestors have erected.

But, *Gentlemen*, let us suppose that a corrupted Parliament should bring your Liberties to that Pass, as that you could have no Appeal but *to the Justice of your Cause and the Protection of Providence*, what must be the Consequence? Not a *Rebellion* indeed, but a *Civil War*, in which whoever are the Gainers, your Country must bleed at all her richest Veins, and a Tyrant again arise perhaps out of her Ruins who shall rivet your Shackles, and by keeping up a few Forms, reconcile you to Slavery. There is indeed

a great deal to be hoped from the noble Spirit of the Nation, more from the Principles of your present Representatives, and most of all from his Majesty's known Attachment to the Rights of his Subjects, that this never can be your Case: But, *Gentlemen, Corruption is of a contagious Nature*, the Power of your Representatives is now near being *determined*, if those you shall chuse to succeed them shall be *corrupted*, who knows how soon the *Infection* may communicate itself from the *Representatives* to their *Constituents*, and thus Luxury debauch every *virtuous Principle*, till at last you lose the very Sense of *Shame at being Slaves*. The Persons of *Princes are mortal*, however, *their Authority may survive*, but an *uncorrupted Parliament* can prevent even the *Possibility* of your Liberties being endangered. It is from that alone that your Prince can derive *Authority*; for the Accessions of Power, which a Minister gains by the *Concurrence of an interested Parliament*, are inconsistent with the Principles upon which his Master holds his Crown, and as soon as the Equity of Laws shall take Place they must determine. In the mean time they can tend only to alienate the *Affections of the People*, which is, to undermine the *Authority of the Prince*.

The next Consideration, *Gentlemen*, I shall

shall trouble you upon, is that of the present State of the Public Debts, after about twenty four Years of profound Peace. I shall not look back or enquire by whose Mismanagement it has happened, that notwithstanding this long Peace, notwithstanding the immense Sums yearly granted for supporting all the Exigencies of the Government, and notwithstanding the Methods laid down for discharging the Public Debts, they still amount to upwards of forty Millions; I shall only take the Liberty to lay before you some of the Consequences that must attend your labouring under so vast a Burden. In the first Place, *Gentlemen*, if by Means of a *corrupted Parliament*, a designing Minister shall continue the Public Debts, you must bid adieu to all Hopes of having your Taxes eased, and consequently to all Hopes of *improving your Manufactures, extending your Commerce, or encreasing your Stocks* to that Degree which they might respectively admit of. In the next Place, *Gentlemen*, you are to consider, that the *Continuance or Increase of the National Debt* gives an immense Strength to a Minister, by the vast Weight it gives him in disposing of the numerous Places which so great a Revenue creates. In short, *Gentlemen*, it can be proved by a Demonstration, that once in three Years every Shilling of the
current

current Specie in the Island passes thro' the Public Offices of some one Branch or other of the Revenue, or thro' the Hands of *those who depend upon the Minister*. This, *Gentlemen*, is an *alarming Consideration*, as it may in its Consequences affect the *private Property* of every Man in the Kingdom. It becomes you to be so *just to your Posterity*, as by a right Choice of Representatives to give a Check to *this growing Evil* which is become already *so intolerable*, and thereby in some measure repair the Breaches which have been already made in the *Constitution*, or at least prevent them from being widened. This, *Gentlemen*, is the only way to take from any *Pretender* to this Crown all Hopes of succeeding, for it is only by the Breach which the late War has left, in laying the Nation under so immense a Debt, that he can have the least Prospect of succeeding.

I am,

Gentlemen,

Yours, &c.

*To the Author of the
Englishman's Evening-
Post, April 26, 1740.*

Sir,



SIR,

May 12, 1740.

I HAVE often considered a cunning Politician in the same Light with a *Gimcrack* Painter, who has the Knack of drawing a Picture in such a Manner as to appear to the Beholder in one Situation to be quite a different Subject than it appears to be in another. Thus I have many Times seen these *German* Artists strike you out a Pope and a Devil upon the same Canvas; and have seen a *Megara's* Head, by the Alteration of the Light, turn into a very fine *Diana* with all the *Silvan* Liberty in her Looks, which is attributed to that Goddess by your Wits of a former Age. Let us see in what Manner the Statesman exhibits his political Tablature. To impose upon the Eye with outward Appearances, assisted by false Lights, is equally his and the Painter's Aim. Take Advantage of People's Fondness for Words and Forms; keep these up, and you may impose the most miserable abject State of Slavery upon them for a full Enjoyment of all their Rights. Let another or even

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the same People view the same Thing with a true unprejudic'd Judgment, all the Stings and Snakes of the Imposition appear, and they stare with Horror on that which they before gazed at with Rapture.

I am led into this Rhapsody by a little Treatise I have now before me entitled *Lex Regia*, or the Royal Law of *Denmark*, which is properly the Instrument by which the People of *Denmark* subjected their Lives, Properties, and Liberties to the Will of their Prince, and indeed it is, I believe, the most comprehensive System of Slavery that ever yet was reduc'd into so small a Compass; nay, I don't know if it may not be called the very Quintessence of all the Arbitrary Maxims that ever were broached, reduc'd into a portable Volume for the Use of Statesmen and the Instruction of the People. When I read it, I was quite struck with Amazement, that any People ever should with open Eyes run into such Misery, as by that Act the People of *Denmark* subjected themselves to, if their Princes should ever make a bad Use of their Power. Yet when I began to cool a little of that Indignation, that is natural to one who has been habituated to read and reason upon the Principles of Liberty, I began to reflect if all this Plan of Tyranny and Arbitrary Power might not be as effectually establish'd in *Britain*, if the Undertakers

dertakers had the Knack to impose upon the People, and to gratify them with a few Forms and a little Indulgence in talking, and, at certain Times, in writing their Minds.

This at first appeared to me impracticable, if not impossible; but when I began to reflect seriously upon the Nature of Power, that it is by Virtue alone that the Abuse of it can be prevented; when I began to reflect that Virtue, if not extremely well founded, if not arising from an honest Heart, and then directed by a wise Head, may be easily undermined by Corruption, I began to look upon Corruption as the *Gimcrack*, which might impose upon the People so far as to present to their Eyes a Shew of Government, which in a false Light has all the Appearance of Liberty, and in a truer one all the Badges of Slavery. That I might not impose upon myself with these splenetic Speculations, I resolved to analyze the Pamphlet I have already mentioned, and to see if it was possible by the Assistance of that universal Menstruum of Corruption, to resolve it into a System, which may be established in a Country that still retains all the Appearances of Liberty.

The Reader is then to take Notice, that this *Lex Regia* is a Law by which *Frederick III.* in consequence of an Instrument signed by the whole Body of the *Danes*,
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gining him Power to establish what Form of Government he should judge proper, prescribed absolute Arbitrary Government to his Succession with a kind of a Necessity imposed upon them never to alter it. It begins with a little Detail of what had passed some Time before, of which, for the Singularity of the Stile, I shall present the Reader with a small Sample. He "says, " That God had graciously inclined the Hearts of his Council with " the unanimous Concurrence of the several Estates of the Kingdom to part " with all their own Rights and Privileges, " *making all Bonds and Deeds signed by us* " *for preserving the Liberty of the People* " *to be null, void, and of none Effect.*" After this Preamble the Law proceeds in several Clauses to lay down the following Propositions, *viz.* 1st, That the Kings of *Denmark* shall worship God in the Protestant Way .2^{dly}, That they shall be independent upon all Power but God. Thus far it is pretty consistent with our own Constitution, but mark the third Clause, *viz.* 3^{dly}, *That the Kings of Denmark shall have the highest Authority to make, alter, and repeal Laws, or dispense with them as they shall think proper.* This at first Sight seems to be a very compendious Digest of Arbitrary Government, and there is no Subject of *Britain* who reads it,

it, but will be apt to bless his Fate that he is born in a Country where the Sovereign can neither make nor alter Laws. But what then? There is in *Britain* as well as *Denmark* a Power, which in conjunction with that of the Sovereign is absolute, and can do both. This Power, if under an undue Influence, may become not only *Absolute* but *Arbitrary*; this Influence can only proceed from Corruption, and if it is possible that a Time may come when the corrupted Heart shall so well answer the corrupting Hand, as that the Majority of those who compose the Assembly where that Power is vested shall be under this Influence. Let me now ask the fondest Patron of Liberty, let me appeal to the warmest Advocate for Power, if the Condition of the People of *Denmark* can possibly be worse than what that of the People of *Great Britain* may, in such an Event, be? Is our Liberty guarded by public Acts? Are our Properties secured by solemn Laws? Yes. But where is the Authority of these Acts? Where is the Force of these Laws, if a corrupted Majority in P———t should surrender up the one and repeal the other? The Case of this Nation would then be much worse than that of *Denmark*. The *Danes* never can be miserable but under a very wicked Prince; but we may be so under a very good one. We have in such

a Case one Struggle left, but the *Danes* may have the same. And the Resistance made against the whole Body of the Legislature by the Collective Body of the People would be just as much against Law, and the positive Constitution of *Britain*, as it would in *Denmark*. Nothing could justify it but the Principles of Self-Preservation, which take Place over all other Considerations. If the Struggle were successful, the Opposers would be dignified as *Patriots*; if otherwise, they would be branded as *Rebels*.

But if Corruption, a Case that is scarcely to be supposed, should glide into Parliament so successfully as to communicate its Infection to a Majority, so as to induce them to make such another Surrender as the *Danes* did, a Resistance made by the Collective Body of the People must meet with much greater Difficulties than a Rebellion, or call it what you will, against an absolute Arbitrary Prince. In the latter Case, the Prince must stand upon his own Bottom, he must trust to his own Troops, and his own Money; but in the former, the People would find they had to do with a vast Natural Interest, even in the Bowels of their own Country, besides the Troops, Revenues, and immediate Dependents upon the Sovereign. All they who were instrumental in effecting such a Step,
would

would immediately grow desperate ; and, to avoid the Resentment of the People, they would swell the Power of the Crown with all their Interest in the Nation, till the Scale might turn too heavy on that Side.

The other Parts of the Royal Law I have mentioned are neither so material, or so much different from the Nature of the Trust, which the Constitution of *Great Britain* invests in the Crown, as to deserve a particular Regard ; I shall only beg Leave to make an Observation or two upon what I have said.

In the first Place then it is evident that an uncorrupted Parliament has always been, and always must be, the only Security of the Nation against the Designs of aspiring Princes and wicked Ministers. In the next Place it is possible for the People of this Nation with a corrupted Parliament to be in as absolute a State of Slavery as the *Danes*, or any other People in the World, and yet they themselves not perceive it, by reason of a few Forms that throw their Condition into a false Light. *Lastly*, The Design of this Letter is to shew the Necessity which the Electors of *Great Britain* are under of chusing an uncorrupted honest Representation at the approaching Elections.

I am, Sir, Yours, &c.

F I N I S.